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ABSTRACT

The American educational system is based upon outmoded premises and should be revised in line with present trends and future needs. Our present system of education was created to serve an industrial society: to develop an elite cadre of well educated professionals, a mass of somewhat educated technical workers, and a solid base of laborers. It stressed discipline, regimentation, and ranking. However, society has changed from an industrial focus to an informational focus. Most people today are employed in professional, service, and technical jobs that require better education and more self direction. Economic goals are shifting; personal goals of fulfillment are replacing goals of security; and government is experiencing increased citizen awareness and informed participation. To accompany these changes, education must be broadened, stress self direction, become continuous, and allow all people to reach the equivalent of mastery of high school. A major base of the schooling system of the future will be the community service center (CSC). The CSC will coordinate program offerings and student needs. Students and their families will meet with human services counselors and educational services counselors to determine the most appropriate educational program for them. There will be a choice of program types, based on varied instructional modes and social environments, at each level of academic development. All programs will have open admissions and clearly defined objectives. Once the American Populace agrees on the importance of human equality, this system will be possible. (AV)

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AN EDUCATIONAL MODEL

FOR THE FUTURE

A Paper Presented to
The Education Section
of the
WORLD FUTURE SOCIETY

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AN EDUCATIONAL MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

Some forty years ago Harold Benjamin, alias J. Abner Peddiwell, described our curriculum as an outdated ritualism, prolonged generations past its time of functional relevance. Then we could laugh at the saber-tooth tiger-scaring curriculum because it was harmless. After all, who cared if silly old men in ivory towers and a few egg-headed young men frittered their lives away in useless pursuits.

Today, the humor is gone! Schools of those days, while at times silly, were basically in tune with the needs of the society. If they were a bit wasteful, inefficient, or even prone to excursions into fantasy, that was OK as long as they got their job done. Unfortunately, this last proviso no longer holds true. In fact, not only don't schools do their job, but they are actually functioning negatively--that is, they not only have no good effects but have some bad ones. Like kings and potentates, the present schooling system has passed its time of usefulness and even its time of being tolerable. Society--or more precisely, the culture--has changed.

Our present schooling system was created to serve an industrial society, and it served it well. We needed an elite cadre of well educated professionals, a mass of somewhat educated technical workers, and a solid base of laborers. Furthermore, these people had to be convinced of the appropriateness of the distribution. The professionals could not question the conflict between their positions of power and exploitation of others and their beliefs about Judeo-Christian ethics and democratic

principles. The middle class, also, had to deal with this conflict as well as with the problem of why they could not rise to the top in our supposedly open society. Finally, those on the bottom had to, at least partially, accept exploitation.

The schools were called upon to do these jobs. They were to educate a few and to teach the rest to accept their position. They focused more on discipline, regimentation and ranking than on education. If thirty percent of the students mastered the material, that was quite adequate. The others were given Cs or lower grades and guided into appropriate stations in life. Far more important than algebra for most was punctuality, persistence in routine, and following instructions.

We rationalized this focus with theories of inherent capabilities, limitations due to home environment, and moral character. "Lower" students were mentally incapable, culturally disadvantaged, or just plain lazy. Hardly could they expect to hold responsible positions in life. The school's job was simply to develop them into good workers. Middle students could assume some responsibility, but must recognize their limitations while taking pride in some narrow special skill. And finally, those "gifted" individuals had to accept the responsibilities (and privileges) that went along with their gifts while we threw the whole weight of the educational system behind helping them to succeed.

The developing industrial society needed this, and our value system supported it. The Protestant Ethic assured us that those individuals who could deal with the delayed gratification structure of schools were superior. It further permitted us to

rationalize that people got what they deserved in life. Materialism permitted us to continue to justify the system, by granting more and more goods to the working class while not granting them more freedom and dignity.

But those days are gone. We are no longer an industrial society. It is interesting to compare our present situation with other times of transition. About two and one half millenia ago the Old World was facing the transition from small, homogeneous kingdoms to multi-cultural empires. The militarists and the philosophers were quite active. All were concerned with how to control the new society. From China to Asia Minor, the answers seemed to fall into the same three patterns: Realists who relied on powerful leadership, Romanticists who relied on human love, and Rationalists who relied on education and training. All had to struggle with a vision of the future, but this problem rests most heavily on the Rationalists.

Let us, therefore, turn to this future society. I don't like the term Post-industrial, as it focuses on what we are not rather than on what we are. Perhaps it is too early to specify the defining element of the new society, but for lack of something better, let us select one that is certainly significant. Several social thinkers today have chosen Information as the outstanding characteristic, and so we shall call it the Informational Society.

Looking at the Informational Society briefly, we see several characteristics which place new and different demands on the educational system. (See Table I) First, most employment today is no longer in industry. Four out of five persons are in

professional, service, and technical jobs which require much better education and self direction as opposed to discipline, regimentation, or bureaucratic functioning. Also in the economic field, the individual in the market economy is replaced by group decision making, consumerism, and regulation. Legislation and pressure groups now speak where individual purchases used to.

Our economic goals are beginning to shift. Materialism is giving way to a more comprehensive definition of the ideal life. Fulfillment is replacing security. Quality replaces quantity. Personal enrichment replaces sensual gratification. It reminds me of the Hindu concept of stages of life. We are like the man who has experienced the worldly pleasures and found that they were not sufficient. Like him, we are now ready to move on to enrichment of the soul; not to deny sensual pleasure, but to move beyond it.

In the area of social relations ranking is no longer functional. Even where it has not been openly questioned, we see its ill effects: white collar criminals whose elite position appears to justify abuses, exploited individuals whose anger can no longer be controlled. Certainly, much crime would be prevented if fewer persons felt abused or cheated. Sloppy workmanship would be reduced if workers did not feel inferior. The malpractice and product liability suits would decrease if the average citizen did not feel resentment at being kept out of personal decision making by the barriers of professionalism. We find it harder and harder to rationalize the conflict between our beliefs in human equality and our practice in society.

Also in social relations we seek a way around isolation,

alienation, and anonymity. Efforts at community and improved interpersonal communication show up in many areas. Experts in medicine, mental health, and criminology all call for improved capabilities for our citizens in interpersonal relations.

Finally, in the area of government it has become obvious that improved citizen awareness and participation is critical to the functioning of democracy. They can and will participate whether they are fully informed or not. The days of naive trust have been replaced by distrust and even rebellion. Certainly informed participation is preferable. We need only look at Proposition 13 to see this.

While we could spend a whole discussion on the characteristics of the emerging society, this brief sketch is sufficient to provide us with a guide to what we need from schools in the next couple of generations. We can visualize the ideal citizen which the schools must help produce. (See Table II)

To begin, if we are to do away with ranking, we must educate all young people to the equivalent of mastery of high school. While perhaps two to five percent will never achieve this, the rest must. They must feel that their place in life is something they can choose, rather than something they are consigned to. All must be prepared for equal participation in our society. They cannot be passed through with Cs and Ds, but must master the skills for full participation.

Furthermore, education must be broad and continuous, broad to permit people to lead rich and fulfilling lives and continuous to permit continuous development towards fulfillment.

The hidden curriculum must shift from discipline, response

to authority, and conformity, to self direction and independent group participation. We must create individuals who can function independently and responsibly, who recognize their own worth and capabilities while understanding the mutual interdependence of all members of the society.

To accomplish these aims, we need a radically different schooling system. Some may even believe that such goals are impossible. While we do not have the time to argue the point here, let me only suggest that this is an empirical question, one which may only be answered by experience. Thus far we have generally not tried these things. However, my experience indicates that when we have really tried, it appears we have succeeded. Let us look at what it will probably take based on present knowledge. (See Table III)

The base of the schooling system of the future will be the Community Service Center (CSC). The CSC will be comparable to a combination of the Park District, Community Education Center, and Human Services Office of City Hall. All social services will be represented here. We will find many of the services that are currently dumped onto the schools being returned to their rightful owners. These services will be performed better, and schools will direct their full attention to education. The Center will coordinate service development and delivery to maximize well-being and a sense of community.

Our main interest in these other services is that schools will access them rather than provide them directly. School nutrition programs, for example, would be combined with general community nutrition programs including those for senior citizens.

School PE and competitive athletics would be provided through community recreation programs. School busses would merge into public transportation. Medical screening and referral as well as emergency treatment would be in the hands of the Medical Services, while Psycho/social Services would pick up problems of counseling and providing therapy for disturbed and maladjusted youth.

Educational Services would be more comprehensive than public schooling is today, representing a combination of public and private schooling, community education, and continuing education. Many of these services would not be directly provided by the community. Rather, the Community Educational Service will be primarily a coordinating and referring agency. The only services directly provided will be those which are in high demand and/or which the community chooses to directly fund. Essentially these will be the same as are often present today, though of higher quality and in different forms. That is, we will have kindergarten through high school with high incidence special education services. Most communities will also have public early childhood and community college/continuing education programs. However, the form of delivery will be radically different.

The focus of educational service delivery will be the counselors. These will be found at two levels. First, the Human Services Counselor, in addition to helping in areas other than education, will assist adults in finding resources for career training, personal enrichment, and basic development, for themselves and their children. However, specific needs will be addressed by the Education Counselor who is supported by a

diagnostic center and who has detailed knowledge of the educational resources available. The main function of this counselor will be to insure that every citizen obtains the required services to achieve full basic development, and is then directed into higher education.

The Education Counselor will not be part of a school, but rather will be committed directly to the client. The Counselor will monitor progress and assist the client in finding appropriate resources.

Typically, the process will work like this. The Counselor will discuss with the student and family the interests, needs, and characteristics of the student. From this there will emerge a picture of the appropriate educational program. The student will then be referred to some programs that fit this pattern and will pick the one he/she prefers to attend. At first the parents will be making most decisions; but gradually the student will assume this responsibility. As the student progresses, the Counselor will provide continuing feedback and guidance on strengths and areas of need.

The educational resources that will be available will be much broader than are typically present now. To educate every citizen requires a range of approaches. Current research indicates that about a dozen or two significantly different educational programs will be necessary for basic development. These will provide a variety of instructional modes and social environments at each level of academic development. They will meet different interests and needs, while ensuring that all students achieve at the desired levels. (See Table IV)

The typical range will include:

a couple of differing nursery schools

perhaps a Montessori School

primary schools with open classrooms as well as fundamental traditional schools

open schools

one room schoolhouses with children of all ages

tutorial programs

parenthood schools with infant and young or prospective parents

self contained classrooms for secondary as well as elementary students

multicultural schools

special interest schools

large traditional secondary schools providing a wide range of specialized courses

small, more personalized traditional secondary schools

peer study group schools where students have much curricular input

evaluation centers for self instructed students

schools for students who want or need very personalized social environments

special training centers for children with disabilities

community colleges

liberal arts colleges

trade/career schools

universities

professional schools

continuing education centers

learning exchanges

Some of these will be in the community, some will not. But all will have open admission for anyone who seeks what they have to offer. The Education Counselor will advise students of what is offered and what it might take to be able to make use of a particular offering. The student will be free to choose and try, and will deal with the consequences of the decision. Exclusion of a student from any program would serve no useful purpose since we seek to maximize each person's development rather than to rank people as at present. A person who enters a program which is inappropriate will simply withdraw and seek a more appropriate alternative.

The primary control that is necessary for this system is that objectives be clearly defined and assessed. Every program will clearly state what it offers and will provide an appropriate evaluation system so that the student knows how well he or she is progressing toward those objectives. Overall developmental progress of a student will be assessed and validated by the Education Counselor and the Diagnostic Center. This will be referenced to community defined developmental objectives. When these are achieved, the student will be certified for full participation in the society. No reference to age would be necessary. The student certified as having completed basic development would then be eligible to enroll in any further training program of choice.

The roots of this system are present today in the alternative school movement, Youth Service Bureaus, community based human

services, and the concept of continuity of services. These will come together in the future as our attitudes and values change. The missing link is a firm belief in human equality. When school people decide that all students can and should be educated, and when the community at large decides that services should be available to all, the mixture will jell.

TABLE I

INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY	INFORMATIONAL SOCIETY
OVER 50% IN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION	OVER 75% IN-SERVICE TYPE JOBS
LESS THAN 1/3 EDUCATED BEYOND MARGINAL LITERACY	ALL EDUCATED FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
CLEARLY RANKED SOCIAL CLASSES	FLUCTUATING SOCIAL ALLIANCES AND SUBCULTURES
MARKET ECONOMY	REGULATED ECONOMY
MATERIALISTIC	ASSOCIATIONAL
GOVERNMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE ELITE	GOVERNMENT BY POPULAR PARTICIPATION
LOCALIZED SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
SECURITY ORIENTED	FULFILLMENT ORIENTED
LIFE-TIME CAREERS	CAREER AS A STAGE IN LIFE
POWER THROUGH CONTROL OF PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES	POWER THROUGH CONTROL OF INFORMATION
QUALITY HUMAN SERVICES FOR THE ELITE	QUALITY HUMAN SERVICES FOR ALL

TABLE II

PRESENT SCHOOLING	FUTURE SCHOOLING
TO EDUCATE AN ELITE	TO EDUCATE ALL
TRAIN TO RESPOND TO AUTHORITY	TRAIN TO BE SELF-DIRECTING
REGIMENTED	SELF-PACED
EMPHASIS ON RANKING	EMPHASIS ON EQUALITY
UNIFORMITY	INDIVIDUALIZED
COMPETITIVE	KNOWLEDGE AS A RIGHT
KNOWLEDGE AS A PRIVILEGE	SCHOOLING AS A LIFETIME ACTIVITY
SCHOOLING AS A STAGE IN LIFE	CLEAR OBJECTIVES
VAGUE OBJECTIVES	HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS
A FEW GOOD TEACHERS, MANY BABYSITTERS	THOROUGH RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
POOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION	SUPPORTIVE

TABLE III

COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER

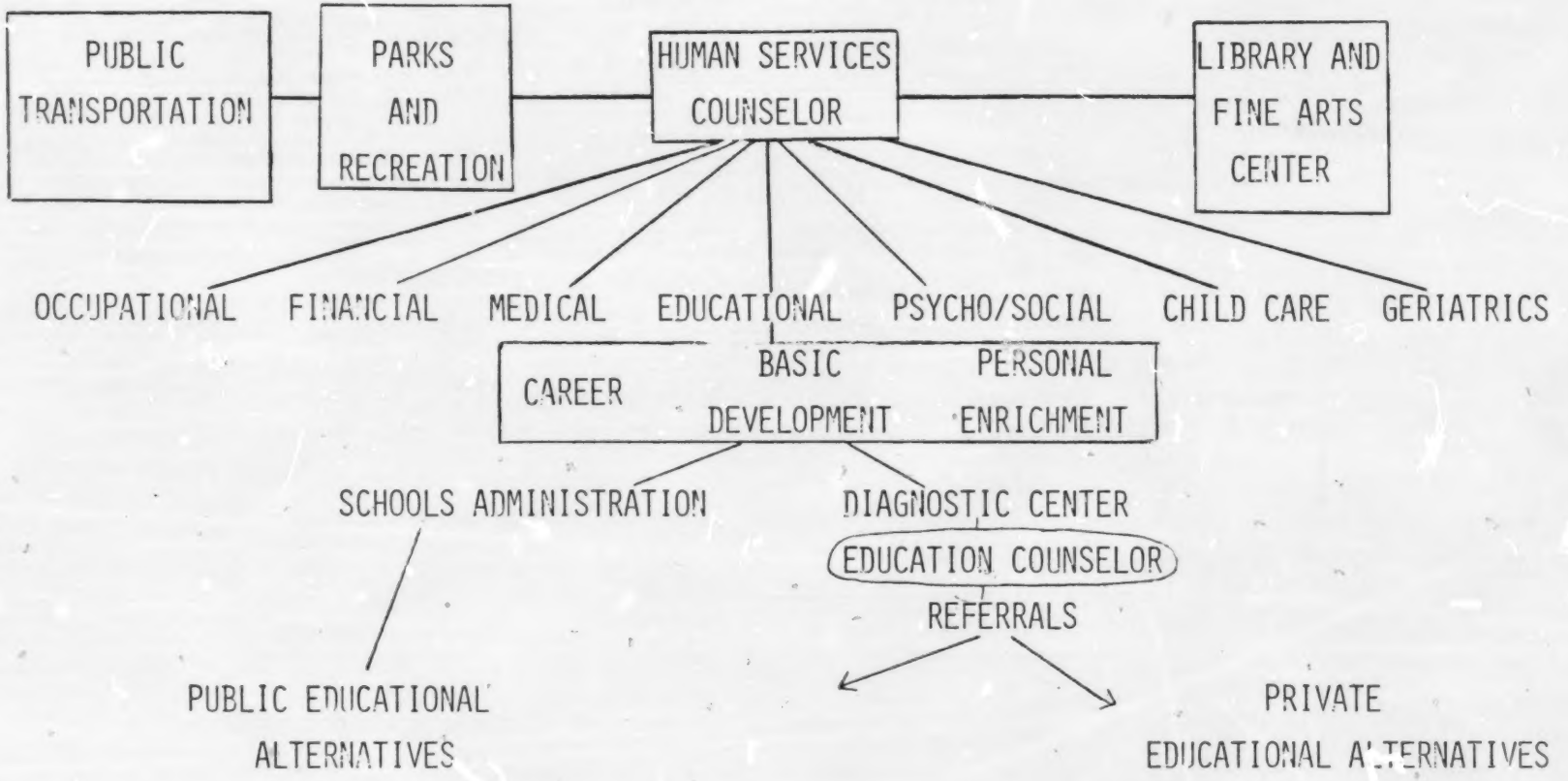

TABLE IV

EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

NURSERY SCHOOLS

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

OPEN CLASSROOMS

OPEN SCHOOLS

ONE ROOM SCHOOLS

FUNDAMENTAL SCHOOLS

SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOMS

LARGE TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS

SMALL TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS

PEER STUDY SCHOOLS

SPECIAL INTEREST SCHOOLS

SELF-INSTRUCTION

TUTORIAL CENTERS

PARENTHOOD SCHOOLS

LEARNING EXCHANGES

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

TRADE/CAREER SCHOOLS

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

UNIVERSITIES

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

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